

And made his dwelling among us...

Brett Knowles

18 JANUARY 2015

Readings: Ex.25:8-9

Ex.29:42-46

Ex.40:34-38

John 15:1-10

Recapitulation of Part 1 (28 December):

John 1:14 = most revolutionary verse in NT

“Word became flesh”: embraces full human reality – “What if God was One of Us?” (Total commitment/involvement of the Incarnation)

- Knows us through and through (he’s been there...)
- There for us where we are...
- Gospel is personal (not just propositional) and incarnational

“Bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh” = true humanity of the Word made flesh...

“And Made His Dwelling Among Us...” = true divinity of the Word made flesh...

“Made his dwelling...” = *skēnoō* (not the usual word for “dwell” in NT: *skēnoō/skēnē* 32x, especially in Hebrews [10x] and Revelation [7x]). Specific meaning = “to pitch one’s tent”

International Standard Version (margin) = “he pitched his tent among us...”

2 significant implications emerge from the use of this word...

1. **Tent = “Tabernacle”** (reference to either the Tabernacle of Moses, or to the heavenly Tabernacle of which it was a shadow), e.g. Heb.8:2, 5

What was the significance of the Tabernacle? (Enormous detail – nearly 40 consecutive chapters in Exodus/Leviticus about building/ maintenance/functioning of the Tabernacle)

Ex.25:8-9 ⁸Have them **make a sanctuary** [*miqdash* = holy place] for me. And I **will dwell** [*shakēn* = sojourn] among them. ⁹Make this **tabernacle** [*ohel* = tent] and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.”

Contrast is with “consuming fire” of God’s [remote] presence on Sinai, which only Moses could approach (Ex.24:17-18); now God could dwell among His people...

Ex.29:42-46 ⁴²For the generations to come this burnt offering is to be made regularly at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting [*’ohel mo’ed* = meeting place] before the Lord. There I **will meet with you** and **speak to you**; ⁴³there also I will meet with the Israelites and the place will be consecrated by my glory. ⁴⁴So I **will consecrate** the Tent of Meeting and the altar and will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests. ⁴⁵Then I **will dwell among the Israelites** and **be their God**. ⁴⁶They will know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them...”

Note what God does at the Tent of Meeting:

- Meet with you (v.42)
- Speak to you (v.42)
- Consecrate (vv.43-44)
- Dwell among the Israelites (vv.45-46)
- Be their God (vv.45-46)

Ex.40:34-38 ³⁴Then **the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle**. ³⁵Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. ³⁶In all the travels of the Israelites, whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out; ³⁷but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out—until the day it lifted. ³⁸**So the cloud of the Lord was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night**, in the sight of all the house of Israel during all their travels.”

In later Jewish commentaries (the Targums) this cloud was called the **Shekinah** [from *shakēn* = dwell] to indicate the **manifest presence of God** (i.e. the **visible representation of God’s presence**). More than just a “royal standard”; could see and enter God’s presence through the *Shekinah*.

Jesus “tabernacled” among us: the visible representation of God’s manifest presence (and we have **seen** his [*shekinah*] glory...)

What does this mean for us?

- a. Jesus is one with God, just as He is also one with us (Fully God, fully man):

John 10:30 “I and the Father are one” (also John 17:11, 22)

John 10:38; 14:10 “The Father is in me, and I in the Father”

John 14:9 “He who has seen me has seen the Father”

- b. God has presented Himself with us in Jesus:

Matt.1:23 “Immanuel” – “God with us”

Matt.18:20 “Where two or three are come together in my name, there I am with them”

2 Cor.5:19 “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ...”

- c. Jesus is the manifest presence (*Shekinah*) of God amongst us, which could be seen and encountered

Heb.1:2-3 “²...in the last days he has spoken to us by his Son... ³The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being...”

1 John 1:1-3 “¹That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have **seen** with our eyes, which we have **looked at** and our hands have **touched**—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ²The life appeared; we have **seen** it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has **appeared to** us. ³We proclaim to you what we have **seen and heard...**”

2. BUT: Tent/tabernacle = temporary accommodation?

Shakēn [“dwell”] means “to settle temporarily”, “to sojourn”

Tabernacle eventually replaced by Solomon’s Temple

- Did this mean that God’s presence among his people was only temporary?
- Did God dwell among us only as long as Jesus was here?

Key passage: **John 15:1-10** The Vine and the Branches

One of the key words of John’s gospel = *menō* (“to continue to be present”) – 41x in John’s gospel (out of 118x in NT) – translated abide, remain, dwell, continue, etc.

¹“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes^[a] so that it will be even more fruitful. ³You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴**Remain** in me, as I also [remain] in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must **remain** in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you **remain** in me.

⁵“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you **remain** in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If you do not **remain** in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷If you **remain** in me and my words **remain** in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

⁹“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now **remain** in my love.¹⁰If you keep my commands, you will **remain** in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and **remain** in his love.”

What does this mean for us?

- Not just God remaining with His people; also His people remaining in me/the vine/my words/my love
- Deepest possible inter-relationship: permanent and enduring

How does this happen? How can temporary earthly life of Jesus and abiding Presence of God among us be reconciled?

John 1:32-33 ³²"I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and **remain** [*meno*] on him. ³³...The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and **remain** [*meno*] is he who will baptise with the Holy Spirit."

John 14:16-17 ¹⁶"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor **to be with you forever**—¹⁷the Spirit of Truth..."

John 16:7 "It is for your good **that I am going away**. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; **but if I go**, I will send him to you."

God made his dwelling among us in Jesus; continues to dwell among us by His Holy Spirit...